

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

200 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117

**Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Dr. Cesarina Thompson, Dean of the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions
Public Hearing: February 8, 2023**

In Support of:

**HB 5441 - AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS OF
EDUCATION OR HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE**

Good morning Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, Senator Kelly, Representative Haines, and other distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 5441 - AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION OR HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE.

My name is Dr. Cesarina Thompson and I am the Dean of the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions at the University of Hartford. I strongly support this legislation that would “establish a student loan forgiveness program or public-private partnership to encourage college graduates to pursue careers in teaching or health care in Connecticut.”

I have the distinct privilege to serve as dean of a multidisciplinary college at the University of Hartford that prepares future teachers, nurses, and other healthcare providers, the majority of whom will seek employment in the State of Connecticut upon graduation. As a long-time member of the Connecticut higher education community and as a nurse, I am well aware of the cyclical shortages that the nursing profession has faced over time. However, the COVID pandemic has contributed to unprecedented challenges that require novel solutions. Likewise, the pandemic also has contributed to significant challenges in the teaching profession, resulting in a critical teacher shortage.

As a State that prides itself on the high quality of its education and health care systems, we must invest resources to attract and retain teachers and health care providers. While this is only a proposed bill and does not contain the specifics of a student loan forgiveness program or how a public-private partnership would work, the University of Hartford supports the intent of this legislation to encourage and assist college graduates to seek employment as teachers and healthcare providers in our State.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and submit comments in support of this proposed bill.